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POSOOWA

VOLUME 37, ISSUE NO. 1 :: OCTOBER 2009



Posoowa has been published monthly for the past 6 years. Here are some covers from old issues. Posoowa thanks its esteemed readers and talented contributors.

## Ranjan Das Inspires All Assamese



Ranjan Das, 42, President of SAP India and a native of Guwahati, passed away on Wednesday, October 21st, in Mumbai after falling unconscious after a workout at his home gym. Ranjan, a graduate of MIT (Bachelors in EE&CS, 1992), and an MBA from Harvard, was appointed President of SAP India in 2007. He oversaw several thousand employees in Bombay and was able to double sales of SAP software in India in his first year. Under Ranjan's leadership, SAP India became the biggest revenue earner among all software companies in India in 2009: <http://www.sap-tv.com/4740>. Ranjan was

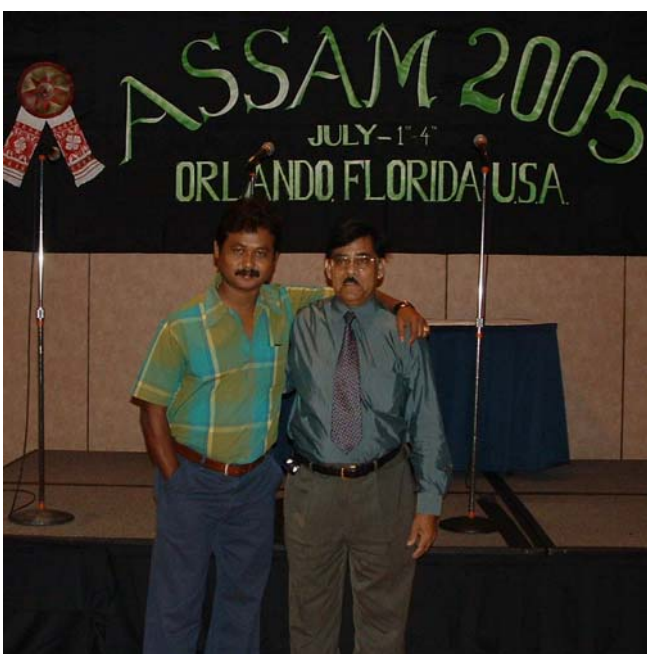
a senior vice president of SAP USA before he moved to India. SAP happens to be the biggest software company in the world at this time. He lived in Silicon Valley for many years and was active in all activities of the Assamese community, in spite of his extremely busy schedule. A 20-minute video of Ranjan, his family and work can be seen in: [http://www.ndtv.com/news/videos/video\\_player.php?id=1142559](http://www.ndtv.com/news/videos/video_player.php?id=1142559). With the passing of Ranjan, Assam lost one of its most illustrious sons, one who undoubtedly had an infinite potential before him.

*Jugal Kalita, Colorado*



*Remembering Courage, Strength, Patriotism and Eternal Youth*

## Sunil Nath is with us no more!



Dear members of the Assamese community in North America,

It is with a sad heart that I bear the following news - our dearest Sunilda (Nath) of Florida passed away early morning Mon (7<sup>th</sup> Sept) due to complications from a stroke. With his passing, we have lost a big hearted and elder member of the Assamese community in North America. Those of us who knew him personally will miss him dearly. I saw him and his wife (Abha baideu) only last fall – difficult to believe that he's no longer with us - really sad news. May his soul rests in eternal peace.

The funeral was held on Saturday (12<sup>th</sup> Sept) at his hometown of Tallahassee, FL. The contact info is below: 3312 Charleston Road, Tallahassee, FL 32309; Tel: (850) 906-0026.

**Sanjib Bhuyan, New Jersey**



## Lily Saikia passes away

whom no words of praise would suffice to describe the qualities she possessed.

Lily Saikia was born in Burma, later escaped Burma war as a five year old girl and flee to Assam with her parents. She was raised and educated in Shillong by her maternal uncle: Dr. Pushpa Dutta Hazarika. After graduation from Lady Keane College, Shillong she had her MA degree in Psychology from Gauhati University.

She was married in February 1959 at Jorhat and travelled to UK with husband Bap Saikia. Ever since they lived in Birmingham. She was a lifelong learner and had a brilliant career, as Senior Social worker in

Walsall social services, under Birmingham County Council Social Services. She died at the age of 72 on Tuesday evening 9:00pm, 6 October, 2009 at her residence in Walsall. Leaving behind her husband Bap Saikia, son - Anjan Saikia & Jane and granddaughter: Hannah. She will be remembered for her evergreen smile, hospitality and her friendship and warmth. May her soul be one with Absolute Soul and enjoy the Eternal Bliss.

Contact: Mr. Bap Saikia, 4 Woodbridge Close Fair Oak, Bloxwich Walsall West Midlands W53 3UG, Tel: 01922-40442

*Rini Kakati, London*

Dear Friends,

It is indeed a difficult task to write a tribute to a person with so many good qualities. No amount of words would be enough to praise such a good soul. It was Lily Saikia (Ilu mahi) was one such person for

## A Tribute to Mrs Lily Saikia

**B**irmingham, August 1978, I was cradling my new born son in our bedroom. I heard my husband's voice "We have a visitor!"

I looked towards the door and saw the most dignified lady. She was immaculately dressed in a blue silk saree, clutching a well wrapped gift for our son. Her flawless fair complexion with shoulder length curly hair added grace to her every movement. She introduced herself by saying "My name is Lily but for my family and friends I am Ilu".

That was my first meeting with her. That first meeting brought a person into my life, who became my mentor, my surrogate mother, and a dearly loved friend rolled into one. That person became my "Ilu Baideo".

We had just moved to Birmingham and did not know anybody. My husband had started work as a junior doctor in a hospital and was very busy. I was an inexperienced new mother in a strange, new place. I will never forget the love, support and advice from Ilu baido during this particularly testing time of our lives.

I spent long hours with Ilu baideo listening to her experience of her past life in Assam, her current life in England, her stories from her travels to various part of the world and her anecdotes from day

to day life. She had a vast knowledge of almost all subjects with a sharp memory and was a natural story teller. We shared our experiences and jokes in person or over the phone and always parted with laughter.

Ilu baideo was born in Mandalay, Burma where her father, the late Girin Hazarika, was working as a surveyor. Ilu baideo still remembers her long arduous journey from Mandalay to Assam during the evacuation from Burma. Ilu baideo finished her school years in Dibrugarh and went to Shillong for her further education. She joined Lady Keane College where she was a brilliant student. While studying in Gauhati University for her MA degree in 1959, she married Mr Bap Chandra Saikia and then left for England. Their only son Anjan was born in 1963.

Though she had her hands full with a busy family life, yet she managed to devote time to teaching. She was a lifelong learner. After obtaining the diploma in social services, she joined the Social Services Department at Birmingham County council and managed to progress to the level of Manager of Walsall social services before her retirement.

Although she led a very busy life she took part in numerous activities with the

Assamese community in England. She was an active member of Assam Association UK and served as a joint secretary for a long time, contributing to its growth and development.

She had a heart of gold and would help anyone at any time. Age, religion, race, sex was no barrier. She could reach the heart of people with her love and genuineness. She would never criticise anybody and saw the goodness in all human beings. I was so fortunate to know her and was honoured to regard her as my sister.

I will always remember her smiling face on the day her son Anjan married his wife Jane. Her only grand daughter Hannah brought immense pleasure to her life.

I spoke to her for the last time over the telephone on Tuesday 6 November 2009 at lunchtime. That same evening, we heard the shocking and sad news of her departure. Her passing has left a void in our life, but her memory will never fade, and the warmth of her love will always be with us.

May her soul rest in peace.

*Manju Barkataki  
Sunderland, UK*



Where ethnicity meets classicism  
**Snigdha Kangkan Taid**

**S**nigdha is the first classical dancer from the Assamese Missing community to become a graduate of Bharata Natyam under direct training from the nationally reputed award winning dance artist and choreographer Guru Indira P. P. Bora at Kalabhumi, Guwahati. She has been undergoing dance training in Bharata Natyam and Sattriya Nritya for many years and has performed at several national and international festivals in Assam & India.

Recently, Snigdha performed her solo Arangetram in Bharata Natyam, official graduate dance ceremony, under Guru

Indira P. P. Bora. Her solo performance included dance items like Ganesh Pushpanjali, Ashtapadi, Nattanam Adinar, Padam, Tillana and Mangalam.

Alongside Bharata Natyam, Snigdha had earned wide appreciation as a very talented dancer through her Sattriya dance performances and reviews in the ICCR sponsored first ever Sattriya dance troupe, Kalabhumi Dance Company, in Vietnam. Besides regularly performing in many dance festivals of India as one of the principal dancers of Kalabhumi Dance Company, Snigdha is a dedicated Tutor in Classical dance at Kalabhumi dance

centre where she is currently teaching classical and folk dance forms to children. Snigdha has a postgraduate degree in Commerce from Dibrugarh University, Assam. Snigdha's long journey from the small town of Lakhimpur in Assam to the classical dance stage is an inspiring story of a dedicated, hardworking and talented dancer from Assam.

Wishing Snigdha the very best of luck in future!

*Menaka PP Bora, London*

*Jackie Bhuyan publishes her debut album*

Hi Everyone!

My CD "Reflections on Life's Journey" is finally out on various Internet sites. I am joined on 4 tracks by Grammy-nominated David Darling with his Cello Improvisations, with myself on Piano and bells. The CD consists of 11 tracks and is an hour long, and was produced in a professional studio.

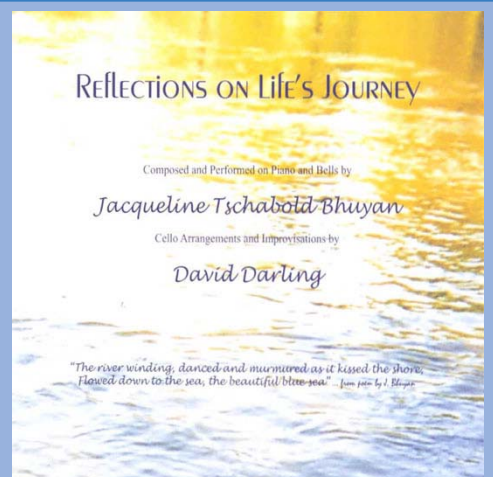
The sites are as follows:(are a direct connection to my page)  
[cdbaby.com/cd/bhuyandarling](http://cdbaby.com/cd/bhuyandarling)  
 samples/available ...either the physical album, or download (album or tracks)

[www.digstation.com/ArtistDetails?albumID=ALB000035499](http://www.digstation.com/ArtistDetails?albumID=ALB000035499)  
 download only

iTunes .... download album or tracks ..TO FIND type: [Jacqueline Bhuyan & David Darling](#)

Jacqueline's website is [www.foreverrubato.com](http://www.foreverrubato.com) bios/album notes/reviews/and discussions on music and the study of music theory and improvisation that may be of interest to all you music students

David's website is [www.daviddarling.com](http://www.daviddarling.com) bios/other CDs produced/concert tour dates/



workshops/etc. If you would like to attend a workshop with David on Improvisation see [www.musicforpeople.org](http://www.musicforpeople.org)

Many thanks and Blessings to you all for your support.

*Jackie Bhuyan and David Darling*

# An Appeal from Kulendu Pathak

Hello Everyone!

I have been in Canada and USA for about two months and I am Happy to meet many of you, exchange ideas and good wishes. I am sad that I could not personally meet many of you.

During discussions and telephonic conversations, I appealed many of you to help raise a Corpus Fund for "Bhabendra Nath Saikia Children Welfare Trust". I happen to be a trustee and the chairman of the Executive Committee of the trust.

You are aware that the Dr. B.N. Saikia established the Trust and its building utilizing his own land and money and also by public donations. He did not live long to give a concrete shape to his innovative ideas for all round development of children. Mrs. Preeti Saikia wife of Dr Saikia is the managing Trustee of the Trust.

The Trustees and the Executive Committee have been organizing several child-centered activities in the premises of Aarohan for children activities in the premises of Aarohan for children of greater Guwahati. Activities include regular training in vocal-music, instrumental music (Tabla, Violin, Key-Board, Guitar etc), Sattriya dance, paintings, computer training, drama and acting etc. Other activities like Library-work, Health check-up, Stage performances etc are encouraged. You will be glad to know that the children from financially challenged families receive trainings free of charge.

The trustees, the Advisors and the Executive Committee Members have planned to extend such child centered activities to different places of Assam. However, the financial resources for such activities are not adequate. The In come from the Corpus Fund will be used to support the activities in far-flung areas.

I on behalf of myself and the Trustees, earnestly request you to donate liberally for the growth of the said Corpus fund. The donations can perhaps be channeled through AFNA or other similar organizations.



We are grateful to AFNA for taking up the cause of helping the trust as one of its activities.

If you wish you can donate directly to the Corpus Fund. The trust is authorized to receive foreign funds and donations to the Trust are exempted from Income Tax in India.

I am deeply impressed to learn that many persons here strongly desire to help people of Assam. Good planning and long term sustained support will be needed to achieve positive results. The trust will be interested in participating activities directed to improving educational and cultural facilities for children, through some meaningful programmes

Whenever you and your family visit Assam, you are most welcome to visit Aarohan (office and activity centre of the Trust) at Beltola and encourage us and the children by your presence, advice and suggestions.

With best wishes, regards and love,

Kulendu Pathak.  
Chairman, Aarohan  
Bhabendra Nath Saikia Children Welfare Trust  
Dr. B.N. Saikia Rd, Basisthapur  
Guwahati 781028  
Tel: 0361-2231022, 9864351408  
Email: kulendupathak@yahoo.com

August 28, 2009

# FASS Proposal for Schools

FASS has recently undertaken a project to upgrade two under privileged schools. The Foundation Stone has kindly been laid by our Astronaut friends Mike Fincke. The project will be funded by contributions from individuals like you and me as well as from donations from willing organizations. Individuals may donate in their own names or in the names of their parents. While donating money, please specify to which school (Parijat Academy or Pragyalaya) you are donating. All individual donors names contributing Rs.5000 or more will be recorded at the building. Thanks to generosity of members, we have already received some funds in USA and India. However, we have a long way to go. We will keep you updated on the fund raising effort.



Mike Fincke Photo: caption NASA astronaut Colonel Edward Michael Fincke handing over the gamosa, which was taken abroad International Space Station, to Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi at a public felicitation function organised by Friends of Assam and Seven Sisters at Pragjyoti ITA Centre, Machkhowa on September 3, 2009, Photo courtesy Assam Tribune

Friends of Assam and Seven Sisters wants to take the issue of education at the primary level as one of the most critical factors for the development of the North East. We are planning to focus more on this issue in our NEIM-2010 in January 2010 in Guwahati. You may also offer your suggestions for the same.

Rajen Barua  
FASS Houston

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PROPOSAL FOR UPGRADING  
TWO ASSAMESE MEDIUM  
SCHOOLS FOR THE UNDER  
PRIVILEGED:  
GUEST HOUSE (ALOHI GHOR) /  
STUDENTS HOSTEL &  
HORTICULTURE FARM  
IN (1) PARJAT ACEDMY (PAMOHI)  
AND (2) PRAGYALAYA (TITABAR)

## Summary:

The proposal includes a brief summary of plans and budget estimates for upgrading two Assamese medium schools for the underprivileged students. It includes construction projects for 2 Guest

Houses (Alohi Ghor), 1 Hostel and 1 Horticulture Farm in (1) Parijat Academy (Pamohi) near Guwahati and (2) Prajnalya (Titabar) near Jorhat, at a total cost of 25 lakhs rupees (\$50,000). The projects are planned to be financed with donations from businesses, organizations and individuals, and to be constructed with coordination, supervision and guidance from FASS members.

## Background:

The North East India is one of the most under developed region of India. In spite of her rich natural resources, the per capita income of the region is as much as 40% below the Indian average in some places in Assam. About 36% of the population of Assam still lives in poverty compared to 26% of India average. The Human Development Index (HDI), a holistic indicator for the overall measure of education, health and income level in India, is one of the lowest in Assam compared to India average. Many children simply do not have access to primary education; others cannot afford it. Where educational facility

is there, the quality is poor. The illiteracy rate in Assam is about 40 % which is far above the India average. Needless to say, our high sounding progress will not mean anything unless we can educate the masses at the primary level. The urgency of the situation is brought home acutely when we find that about 40% of the population of the North East India is below 14 years. The Vision 2020 plan speaks about Sarva Shiksha Abhijan (SSA) for Education for all to solve the problem. However, it remains to be seen how much success it will have in the North East India because of the multi cultural complexities of the region. For a solution to the educational problem in the North East India, we need more aggressive plans from all quarters. One key factor is to help and promote local educational entrepreneurship at the grass root level for advancement of Assamese medium schools.

Details of the proposal can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/fassproposal>

Jayanta Barman  
Vice President, FASS Guwahati

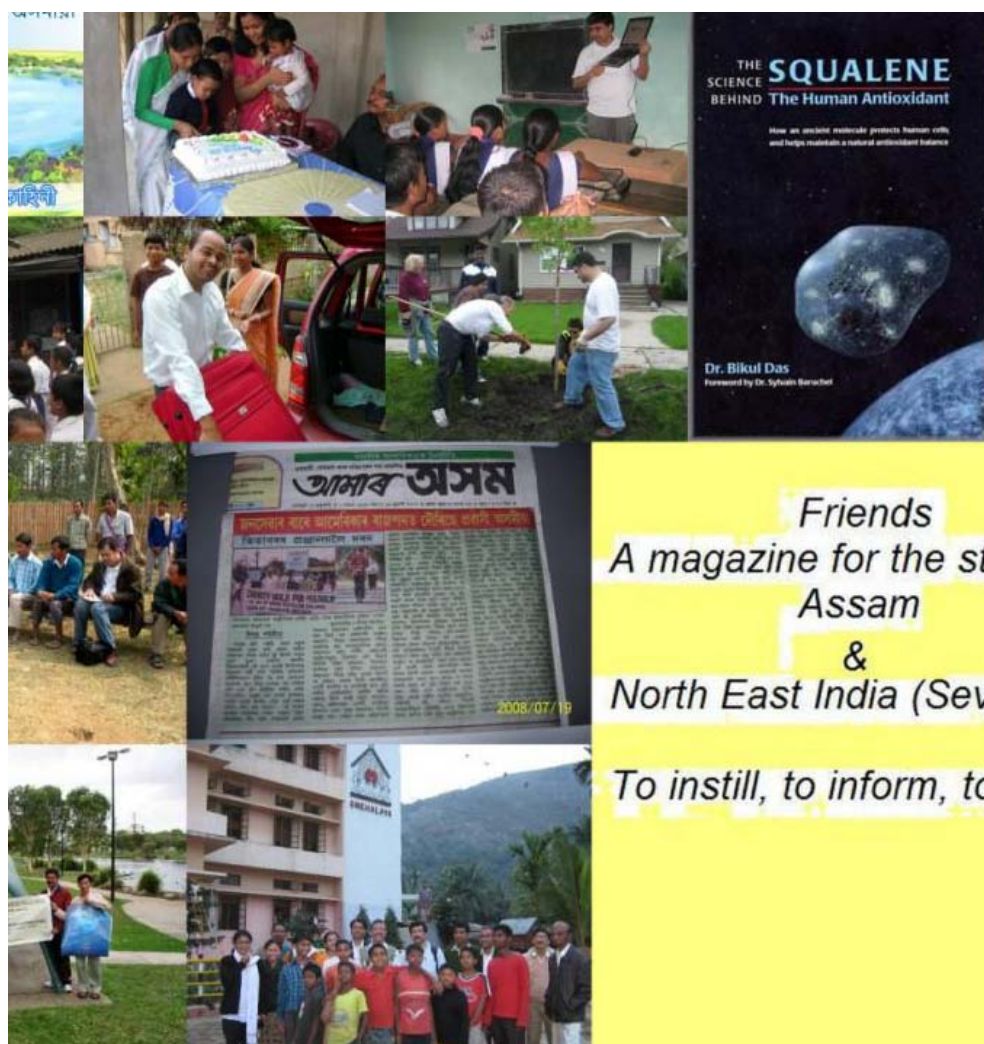
# Friends, a magazine by the Non Residents for students of Assam and North East

The Assamese Diaspora spreading over United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia and Asia can play an important part in Assam's development. The Diaspora consisting of a large reservoir of highly trained experts and scientists especially in the areas of Science, Technology and Knowledge based industries can certainly act as in the

general and the state government in particular. Based on these successful interactions, it is being felt that NRA can contribute in meaningful, achievable, and measurable ways. A process to sustain and organize these efforts has also started with the Government of Assam showing keen interest. In recent months Non Residents have successfully coordinated a number of unique

instrumental in instilling confidence and encouragement into the hearts and minds of the young students in the area of space research.

- Organizing and participating in events like "Charity and peace walk" and "Run for a cause". These events have enthused the people and Newspaper and digital media provided extensive coverage.
- Summer training and volunteering at a few educational institutions.
- Organization of Seminars, Workshops and Interactive Meets between the professionals/students and expatriates of this region.



Friends  
A magazine for the students of  
Assam  
&  
North East India (Seven States)  
To instill, to inform, to inspire

"Friends" is an extension of this effort. We feel that a magazine in the print form will create a centre of information where information relating to job and educational opportunities abroad could be concentrated and made available to the youth of Assam and North East. The Non Residents will be able to share their experience and knowledge with students and interested groups. We are hoping that this magazine will be made available to the students of schools, colleges and Universities through

development of the region through the transfer of their knowledge and skills.

In recent years, Non Residents have taken a number of initiatives specially in the educational sector. There is also keen interest shown by the people in

events:

- Space talks at four educational institutions of North East India with NASA Astronaut Mike Fincke. The talk was considered a path breaking event and has been

libraries. The proposed magazine will also contain a directory section to provide the contact information of the individual Non Resident. This will help the students to get the necessary information.

Ankur Bora, Dallas, Texas

# Padmanav Bordoloi *performs in London*

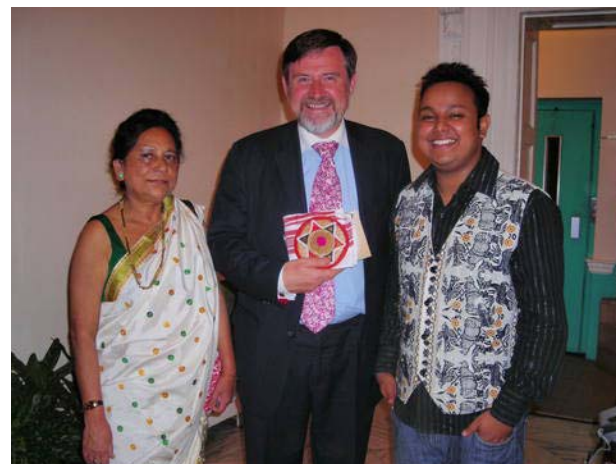
On 25 August, 2009, Nehru Centre (the cultural wing of Indian High Commission) in London presented a stunning confluence of modern and classical music. The show mirrored the age-old timeless tradition of Indian music with Padmanav Bordoloi a top 12 contestant of Indian Idol 2007 who also took part in Real TV: Sitaron Ko Choona Hai 2009.

Padmanav was invited by Mr. Syed Asif Ibrahim, Minister, Culture to perform in the International Hindi conference at the Indian High Commission on 31 August, 2009. Radio 92FM invited him to perform on 7 September, 2009. SunRise Radio & Television (the greatest Asian Radio Station in the world) arranged an interview of Padmanav with Ravi Sharma on 3rd & 10th September, 2009. His final show in London held at Lydhurst Avenue, North Finchley on 12 September, 2009 which was organised by the Hindu Cultural Society, one of the biggest Indian organisation.

The main attraction on 25 August, 2009 was Sony TV UK who were pleased to organise - an evening with Padmanav and NRI members.

The programme at the Nehru Centre was initiated by Ms. Monika Kopil Mohta, Director and Minister of Culture. She spoke highly art and culture of Assam and about the popular artist of the evening. Chief guest of the evening was Barry Gardiner, hon'ble Member of Parliament (Labour) from Brent North and Rajesh K. Srivastava, Deputy Director. Kailash Budhwar, BBC World Service, Rajinder Chopra, Hindu Cultural Society, Tejinder Sharma, Secretary General Katha UK. In a unique traditional Assamese way, invited artist and guests were felicitated with phulam gamosha and japi by Rosy Sen & Anahita Sen. In return Padmanav said in Hindi: "Aap ne ye sanman jo mujhediya hai, ye sirf mujhe nahi, puri Assam-bashiyo ko de raha hai. Ye mein kabhi nahi bhulunga." He specially thanked Rini Kakati for her effort to bring him to this prestigious gathering in London for the first time. Barry Gardiner mentioned the richness of North East India especially Assam and the importance of showcasing unity in cultural diversity.

Padmanav held the audience in complete thrall with his mixture of modern and classical tune what was a fitting to the long list of cultural activities at the Nehru Centre. Virtues and simplicity and grace that made young Padmanav the most enchanting artist from today's younger generation of the musical word of India especially Assam, showed up in ample evidence during the performance by the yesteryear Indian sensation.



The evening commenced with Padmanav dedicated this song to his mother by singing - "Meri Maa" the heartfelt song of Aamir Khan's Taare Zameen Par which moved the audience clapping hands in tears. He sang a mixture of golden oldies and Bollywood like Raj Kapoor's "Jeena yahan marna Yahan", Guide. "Tere mere Sapne", Mukesh's "Pyaar Ka Nagma" Kishore Kumar's "Pal Pal Dil Ke Paas" and Kailash Kher's "Saiyyan". ••When he sang "Hule Hule Ho Jayega Pyaar" (Rab Ne Bana Di Jodi". The crowd became nostalgic Mr. Gardiner joined in the chorus "Hule Hule". Assamese Bihu by Rosy Sen & 11 year old, Anahita Sen. The tune of dhol, pepa, gagana excited the Assamese ladies to come to the floor and dance with Padmanav which left the audience spellbound. ••The grand finale was a rendition of AR Rahman's "Vande Matarm - Maa Tujhe Salaam" a superb vocal presentation of the powerful lyrics by Padmanav. The people in the audience stood up join hands with pride and honour in respect to their motherland by singing - "O Maa Tujhe Pranaam - Vande Mataram". •• Padmanav Bordoloi is an inspiration and his flawless performance is a silent but forceful message for all our upcoming singer to follow.

*Rini Kakati, London*

# Voices from the North East

by **Siyahi and India Habitat Centre**

(13<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> October 2009)

**India Habitat Centre, New Delhi**

**S**iyahi and India Habitat Centre presented a focused literary meet on the stories, tales and folk narratives of the North East India on October 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> in New Delhi.

The verdant seven sister states from the North East of India have a unique indigenous culture where myths, oral traditions, legends and folklore are commonplace and yet unique. The meet took into account the quantum of diversity in art and culture, which is evident from the multitude of languages, ethnic groups and their common collective memory. It will deal with the art of storytelling in context to the development of North Eastern culture and civilization. The event brought authors, poets, storytellers and performers together to engage in a cultural dialogue and understand the North Eastern literature in all its myriad forms and dimensions.

The detailed programme is given below.

**13<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

7.00 pm - 8.00 pm

*Rhythm of Words and Voices*

**Introduction by Ravi Singh & Reading by Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih**

**Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih** is a poet, short story writer and translator. He works as a Reader in the Department of English, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong. He has been awarded *Veer Shankar Shah-Raghunath Shah National Award* and *North-East Poetry Award* besides a *Fellowship for Outstanding Artists 2000* from the Government of India. He has a total of twelve publications in Khasi and seven in English besides edited volumes and translation works of poetry and short stories in both Khasi and English. His works have been translated into many Indian and foreign languages. A collection of Khasi folk stories retold by him was recently published by Penguin India as *Around the Hearth: Khasi Legends*.

**Ravi Singh** has been with Penguin India since 1994, and is now Publisher & Editor-in-Chief.

8.30 pm – 9.30 pm

**A concert by the East India Company, A Musical Invasion**

A fine balance between folk and electronic music is created by The East India Company. Their sound epitomises a larger freedom and experimentation. Being experienced culturally and musically in India today, they are moving towards futuristic electronic dimensions while remaining earthed in rich tradition. The live East India Company experience reflects their flexibility and innovation as musicians through improvisational techniques, assimilating diverse sounds like Rajasthani folk And Naghadas.

**14<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

7.00 pm - 8.00 pm

**Turning Point: New Writings from the North East**

**Namita Gokhale in conversation with Mamang Dai, Temsula Ao & Bijoya Sawian**

Mamang, Temsula and Bijoya will be reading from their works. Mamang will also read from her new book on Arunachal Pradesh

**Mamang Dai** is a former bureaucrat, journalist, poet and writer. Her articles, poems and short stories are published in various journals. She is the author of *The Legends of Pensam* and *Arunachal Pradesh – The Hidden Land* for which she received Verrier Elwin Award in 2003. *River Poems* was her first collection of poems.

**Temsula Ao** is a Professor in the Department of English, North Eastern Hill

University, Shillong and also Dean, School of Humanities and Education at NEHU. She has been named for the *Padma Shri* Award for Literature and Education. Prof. Temsula has to her credit the publications of seven books and three poems in anthologies and is the author of *Ao-Naga Oral Tradition* (2000). Her recent work includes a powerful collection of short stories titled *These Hills Called Home – Stories From A War Zone*, published by Zubaan and Penguin Books.

**Bijoya Sawian** writes in English and translates works of Khasi into English. Her published works include 3 books of translations from Khasi into English - *The Teachings of Elders*, *Popular Khasi Folk Tales* and *About One God*. She has completed a collection of 11 short stories revolving on contemporary life amongst the Khasis of Meghalaya, *The Family Secret and other stories*, and she is currently working on a novel, *Men In The Shadows*, based on the present situation in the turbulent North East.

**Namita Gokhale**

Namita Gokhale is a multi-faceted Indian novelist and publisher, and author of *Paro: Dreams of Passion, Gods, Graves and Grandmother*, *A Himalayan Love Story*, *The Book of Shadows*, *The Book of Shiva* and *Shakuntala: The Play of Memory*. She is a partner in *Yatra Books*. Namita helped organise the first ever International Festival of Indian Literature, *Neemrana 2002*, and the *Africa Asia Writers' Conference, Neemrana 2006*. She also helped design and programme the *Jaipur Literature Festival, 2006 and 2007* and co-directed the festival for 2008, 2009 and is continuing to do so. She is the Founder Director for *Translating Bharat*.

Mita Kapur,  
CEO, Siyahi

*Angarag (Papon) Mahanta performed during the event at Indian Habitat Centre (Photograph by Kazu)*



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# My visit to Montgomery, Alabama

## *The epicenter of US Civil Rights Movement*

**T**hirteen days ago I graduated from Infantry School and undertook a bus trip to a neighboring town 80 miles away - to visit Rosa Parks Museum. She is considered the mother of the US Civil Rights Movement, which led to right to vote for African Americans - in 1965 I believe - about 200 years after USA was formed as a democracy. She was arrested for refusing to give up her seat in a bus to a white man — which led to bus boycott.

### TUSKEGEE

It was a journey I am not likely to forget for a while. About halfway through the rustic region with poverty ridden bedraggled houses and cotton fields, I was surprised to see a familiar sounding name - the town of Tuskegee. Although the name seemed familiar I could not remember a single event associated with it. Maybe it is where Martin Luther King lived or maybe I read some African American's autobiographical account (as SAT passage) about his early job searches while I was teaching at C2 Education in Fairfax/Washington DC. However, I was alarmed to discover that the tiny town did not have a single hotel or inn and could not see any taxis. The biggest building was a court house - which I learned later played a role in the Civil Rights Movement.

I had no idea about the city I was going to and was now fearing that even Montgomery may not have hotels or taxis. Thus, I kept calculating other courses of action till I saw a signboard - Hilton Hotel 2 miles ahead!! Of course, I wasn't going to stay in such an expensive place. I had decided that I would stay in an area in the center of the town - close to where Rosa Parks was thrown out of the bus. I expected the area to be a bedraggled place where lots of poor people lived (like Rosa Parks), which

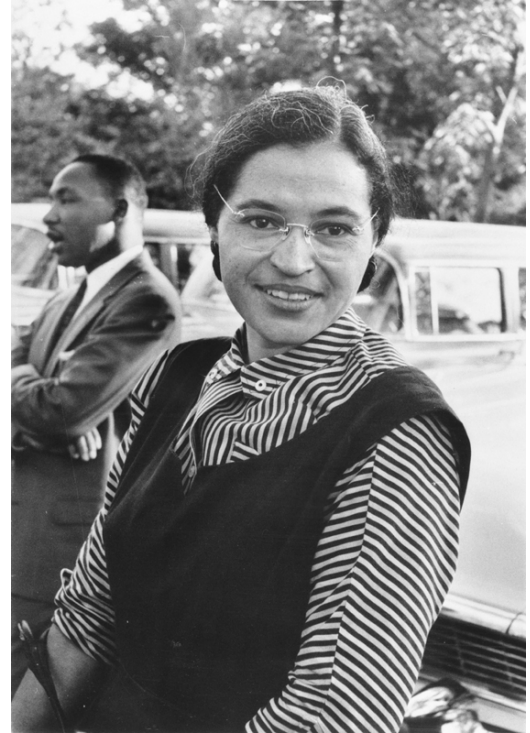
needed to use buses to go to work etc.

### The MOTEL

From the Greyhound bus terminal it was a 20-minute taxi car ride to the downtown - and the taxi driver took me to the cheapest hotel possible. I got a military discount on the rate (\$39 per night) - seeing my uniform - my first ever stay all by myself in a US hotel (used Youth Hostels till then). Surprisingly, the hotel guy spoke in an Indian accent and within minutes I was talking to him in Hindi. His family members were very glad to see an Indian in US Army uniform and his older brother offered to drop me to the Greyhound bus terminal in his car the next day. We even had lunch at his place, and he packed some Diwali sweets for the journey to Washington DC.

His hotel was just across the street from the State Capitol building. Thus, a very secure location. I roamed around that night and was surprised to see how ornate and sophisticated all the buildings around the area seemed. It seemed inconceivable that racism was practiced here. I saw the church where ML King was a pastor for 6 years and where the bus boycott had been initiated. It was right in front of the main entrance of the State Capitol - halfway in the middle of the street.

Finally, I reached Rosa Parks Museum - built at the spot she was thrown out of the bus. It was within the Troy State University campus - a Greek soldier's statue was right there on the other side. Surprisingly, many people - white and non-whites came



forward, shook my hand, and thanked me serving in the army - while I was roaming thus while in uniform. It seemed strange but felt good.

### THE MUSEUM

Next morning I walked the half mile to the museum again - after leaving my bags with the hotel owner. The museum was quite high tech - many TV screens and posters. One had to move from room to room to follow the narration. In the second room there was an actual bus parked at a street intersection. Through its windows (all TV screens) one could see Rosa Parks entering the bus and sitting in the seat just opposite us. The driver could be seen as well as the passengers. Like a giant network of TV screens the whole incident was shown through the bus windows. In the end she was arrested.

In another room I saw a man sitting - it was hard to believe - even from a foot away that it was a statue. Then I saw Mahatma Gandhi's picture

framed on his room's wall. This person was Martin Luther King, who spearheaded the Civil Rights movement. I was surprised to learn that many white folks had also boycotted the buses in support of African Americans.

The museum keeper disagreed with me that I had seen the body of Rosa Parks in US Capitol Building in Washington DC in 2005. She said that she had seen the body when it was kept at her museum, while I had merely seen her closed casket. I also found that Rosa Parks was born in Tuskegee, but moved to this place while in middle school.

After lunch at the hotel owner's home - right behind the reception desk - we left for the Greyhound bus terminal to start my 22 hour bus journey to Washington DC.

#### THE MIGRANT

The hotel owner told me his surprising tale of starting as a bus conductor in UK then after 13 years becoming a bus driver. After 20 years in UK he moved to USA, where due to bad economy green cards could be obtained for \$5,000 business



investments. Now, after 30 years in the US, he owns a 40-room motel. Interestingly, when he was twenty-five, his grandfather in India asked him where he would like to go to seek his fortune - Africa or Britain. His parents were then in Mozambique. He chose Britain - where anyone could emigrate - without any visa, etc.,- in 1960s. In 1962 India took over Goa, which was under Portuguese rule. Portugal retaliated and asked all

Indians to leave Mozambique (under its control), including his parents and brothers. This guy settled them in Britain and moved on to the US.

Thus, ended the memorable journey to Rosa Parks Museum in Montgomery Alabama.

**Umesh Sharma**  
Washington D.C.  
October 16, 2009

## Majuli Theme exhibition at IIC: Festival of the Arts @ The River

India International Centre, Max Mueller Marg had organised a Festival on the rivers of the World from 8th Oct-14 Oct. An exhibition with the theme "People of Majuli Island" was on view in the Basement at IIC Annexe. The exhibition depicted the cultural and rural life of Majuli. Guru Axon, Masks, costumes, musical instruments, fishing and bamboo implements etc were on display. A concurrent exhibition of photos of Majuli by well known photographer Sumant Barooah was also on display.

The exhibition was inaugurated by the doyen of Indian culture Dr Kapila Vatsayan on 10th Oct. An Assamese Food Festival was organised by the IIC

chef, the recipes for which were provided by Uruli, Assamese Women's organisation of Delhi. It was followed by a cultural programme from Majuli's Sattriya culture. Mr Bhabananda Borbayan, resident Guru of Srimanta Sankaradeva Bhawan performed a memorable Sattriya dance followed by singing of Borgeet by the members of Assam Association, Delhi cultural team. A French girl Soazic presented a Borgeet, which mesmerised the audience.

The Majuli exhibiton was visited by scores of people and was extended to 19th October, 09 on popular demand.

**-Barnali Das, New Delhi**

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## Worldwide launch of music Video 'A Tribute to Assamese Music'

25.10.2009

A historic Music Video produced by Radio Gupshup 94.3 FM was released on 25th October at Teen Murti Nehru Memorial Auditorium, New Delhi by the Union Environment & Forests Minister Mr. Jairam Ramesh. The

event was organized in association with Assam Association, Delhi. This Video encompasses whole gamut of music from Srimanata Sankaradeva to Zubeen, Borgeet to modern songs. The occasion was graced by Mr Prodyut Bordoloi, In-

dustry Minister, Assam, Smt Archana and Sri Khogen Mahanta, members of the Association and a huge representation from the young genre of music lovers from the Universities and colleges of Delhi.

Speaking on the occasion Mr Jairam, to the thunderous applause of the packed auditorium mentioned that he is also an Assamese by temperament. He listens to Assamese music regularly, specially that of Bhupen Hazarika. He was also humorous in commeting that he is not a 'lahe', 'lahe' Assamese. The later half event was a live performance by Angaraag 'Papon' Mahanta, who enthralled the crowd for about an hour.

Anyone looking for a copy of the VCD may write to the CEO of Gupshup at saikiang@rediffmail.com.

-Manoj Kumar Das, New Delhi

## Appointment

Dr. Bhubn C Barah, Ph.D has assumed charge on 18 September 2009 as Director, National Centre of Agricultural Economics and Policy Research (NCAP), Pusa Institute, DPS Marg New Delhi 110 012. NCAP is a unique institute of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research, dealing with policy research for Indian agriculture and the group of highly professional and motivated scientists respond quickly to contemporary



issues and changes in the economy within the country and globally. Interface with the researchers, governments, international bodies, NGOs and corporate sector is the

novelty of the centre. Before joining this position, he served several national and international organisations and universities of repute. The prominent among them include: Assam Agricultural University, Central University, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh,

International Crops Research Institute for semi-arid and Tropics (ICRISAT), NABARD, Mumbai, NIPFP (neighbouring Srimanta Shankardev Bhavan), New Delhi, International Rice Research Institute

(IRRI), Manila, Philippines, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA, Duke University Durham, North Carolina, USA, as Fulbright scientist. Dr. Barah travelled widely across the country and abroad on various assignments. He is member of several professional societies and the Joint Secretary, AERA, India.

Dr. Barah hails from Jamagurihat (Dhalaibil), Sonitpur districts, Assam, married to Niva Barah. His two sons, Bhaskar and Pallav working abroad in reputed MNCs. Ever since 1969, Dr. Barah has been associated with the Assam Association, Delhi and a life member.

## New Executive Committee of Assam Association, Delhi

New Executive Committee of Assam Association, Delhi has taken over charge from the outgoing Committee on Saturday the 12th September at Srimanta Sankaradeva Bhawan. The Annual General Body was held 6th September. 09. There was election for a few posts while a number of posts were filled unopposed.

The new committee is headed by Dr Ranjit Baruah. Dr Baruah retired as Additional Director, CGHS. Mr Manoj Kr Das, former General Secretary and Mrs Rumi sarmah were elected as Vice Presidents. Mr Tridib Saikia, former Technical Director, Doordarshan News was

unanimously elected as General Secretary. Smt Protima Thakuria, Smt. Rina Handique, Smt. Uttara Das were elected as Secretary (Coordination), Secretary (Culture) and Secretary (Welfare) respectively. Mr Pabitra Nath was reelected as Treasurer of the Association. He is the longest serving Treasurer. Veteran Radio News reader Mr Hiron Dutta resumed the charge of Editor 'Samayik'- the Magazine. In addition he continues to edit 'jogajog'- the monthly newsletter.

The other Executive members include Gr Cpt (retd) A C Barua, Dr Bipul Kr Baruah, Dr Amol Hazarika, Dr.

Nilamoni Sarmah, Mr Atanu Prasad Barua, Dr Nirmal Chandra Hazarika, Mr Rabin Pathak, Dr Jayanti Mala Devi, Dr Sassnka Sekhar Dutta, Mr Dip Saikia, Mr Tassaduque Hussain, Mr Sushil Aggarwal. They all bring rich experience with them.

With the commissioning of the Cultural Centre Srimanta Sankaradeva Bhawan, the task before the new EC is to build a system for proper utilisation of the centre and propagation of rich culture & heritage of Assam in the National Capital with renewed vigor.

-Babul Gogoi

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**Posoowa** is published monthly. Ganesh Bora, on behalf of Assam Society of America, has published this issue of Posoowa. The editors are Ankur Bora (Texas), Babul Gogoi (New Delhi, India), Barnali Das (Delhi), Ganesh Bora (Fargo, North Dakota), Jugal Kalita (Colorado Springs, Colorado, Editor-in-Chief), Kaushik Phukan (Seattle, Washington), Manoj Kumar Das (New Delhi), Rini Kakati (London, UK), Sanchayita Sharma (London, UK) and Satyam Bhuyan (Ames, Iowa).

**ASA Executive Committee:** President: Dr. Ganesh Bora, Fargo, ND; Past President: Dhruba Das, Coatesville, PA; Vice President: Dr. Samar Jyoti Bhuyan, Phoenix, AZ; General Secretary: Mr. Utpal Borah, Glenmoore, PA. Executive Members: Mr. Kedar Bhuyan, Mays Landing, NJ, Dr. Nilakshi Phukan, Boulder, CO, Ms. Bornali Talukdar, Omaha, NE, Mr. Arindam Barkataky, Orlando, FL, Mr. Probal Tahbaldar, Kendall Park, NJ.

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*Mantu and Silpi Baishya of Omaha, Nebraska have made this issue of Posoowa possible with their generous contribution*



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